



February 2004

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

It's a privilege to be back in Olympia as your advocate for the 2004 legislative session. It's the so-called short 60-day session. While it may be short, the days are long, and the work fast-paced and complicated – and rewarding! I want to keep in touch by means of this brief letter. After the final gavel falls, you'll receive a full report, but in the meantime let me mention some of the challenges and major issues I'm working on.

Good-Paying Jobs with Benefits...and the Economy

Last year, I supported the initiative to land the 7E7, and was rewarded when Boeing selected Everett as the assembly point. I supported the "nickel package" that is now improving transportation and financing auto ferries that are vital to having more (and more reliable) Kitsap ferry runs. I worked, and will continue to work, on improving permitting and environmental protection, to get highway and bridge projects under way with fewer delays and better results. I proudly voted for the biggest investments in school and college construction in decades.

All these proposals will help stimulate business and create jobs. But while our economy is steadily improving, "structural" changes are simultaneously eroding our job base. I'm particularly concerned about the export of manufacturing jobs, and even call centers, to other countries such as India, Singapore and Mexico. No wonder job growth remains anemic! We need to keep good-paying jobs and benefits *here*! I'll continue to search for ways to make that happen, including research and development incentives for investing in *local* job creation.

Of course, we are fortunate that the U.S. Navy's strong presence in Kitsap is a huge stabilizing factor for our West Sound economy and communities. I'll continue working with Congressmen Norm Dicks and Jay Inslee to keep Kitsap as the home for vital Navy functions, jobs, and families.

Education and Training

To build strong citizenship and keep good jobs at home, we need to deliver the very best education we can. We need high school grads with essential skills, ready for college and the world of work and self-learning. We need world-class public schools and colleges, with the resources to attract and keep the finest staff and teachers. We need to ensure not only that school boards and administrators have the flexibility to make tough decisions to improve under-performing schools, but also that they understand it is their duty to lead the way to higher academic standards and better results – for all kids, including the most challenging.

I am using my 30+ years of experience in education to shape and help pass needed reforms to improve public education from pre-school to grad school. I have already voted this session to give *you* the final say on whether to retain or reject the 60-percent super-majority requirement for approving school levies.

Washington State Ferries

When it comes to our ferry system, customer service and satisfaction are the standards that matter to me. Clearly, riders are not satisfied with either the quality or the range of services being provided today, and neither am I.

As vice-chair of the House Transportation Committee, I've been clear in my discussions with ferry-system administrators that I hold management responsible for making headway on a number of fronts:

- Providing more ferry runs on the Bremerton route;
- Resolving the uncertainty over WSF's plans for passenger-only service, and the future of the two passenger-only vessels that are now in "shrink wrap";
- Improving labor-management relations;
- Restoring on-board food service;
- Spending construction funds wisely (For example, determining whether buying new ferries, or leasing them, would best serve taxpayers and ferry-riders); and
- Expediting a final decision on the Eagle Harbor maintenance facility.

I've asked the House Transportation Committee to convene a new task force to immediately look into these and other issues – rejecting the short-term fixes and political games that have plagued earlier efforts. I'll report back to you on our progress, and as always, I welcome input from folks throughout the 23rd district. We're all dependent on the ferry system to some degree, and we can lead the way to reform and progress.

Affordable Health Care

True, federal law limits what we can do in health care, and doesn't always help. The inadequate Medicaid payment formulas that penalize our state are a good example. But there are things we can do, such as helping seniors and low-income households find affordable prescription drugs. I understand very well why citizens go to Canada (or use the Internet) to buy the same medicines at one-third or half the U.S. price. But this isn't a lasting solution. That's why I voted for the new law that uses state purchasing power to leverage the best available drug prices. We must address the acute needs of individuals and small business owners for affordable insurance and insurance that rewards personal responsibility for avoiding behaviors that create health risks later.

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There are plenty of other issues to work on, as well, including two very pressing tasks: creating a new primary election model to replace the blanket primary that the courts have done away with, and the adoption of a "zero oil spills" policy for all Puget Sound waters. I'll have more to report in my post-session newsletter. In the meantime, please contact me with any questions, comments or suggestions you have about how I can serve you better. E-mail is the quickest way to reach me, but I appreciate your phone calls and letters as well. Thanks for allowing me to work for you.

Yours sincerely,



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State Representative
23rd District